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SUBJECT: VISITING AF/W DEPUTY DIRECTOR DISCUSSES COTE
D'IVOIRE, SENEGAL, TOGO AND OTHER REGIONAL ISSUES WITH
FRENCH MFA

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: During a January 10 meeting with visiting AF/W Deputy Director Larry Andre, French MFA DAS-equivalent for West Africa Bruno Foucher stressed deep GoF pessimism on Cote d'Ivoire (CdI). GoF demarches to regional leaders prior to the Libreville Summit called for African Union (AU) reinforcement of the UN arms embargo on CdI, establishing a simplified political calendar on the basis of Accra III, and reinforcement of ONUCI by 1200 troops, to come mainly from Africa. France was not ready to call for further CdI sanctions yet, but if the situation continued to deteriorate, the UNSC should sanction lower-level actors. The GoF was eager to begin consulting on sanctions lists with the U.S. and within the UN CdI sanctions committee as a warning to the parties. Foucher described a turnaround in the GoF position on a referendum as a means of ratifying the Linas-Marcoussis changes to Article 35 of the CdI constitution, which the GoF now opposed and viewed as a tool for President Gbagbo to negate this key element of the Linas-Marcoussis accords. Foucher reported "rumors" that former U.S. Ambassador Render was a possible candidate to replace SRSF for CdI Tevoedjre, and suggested France welcomed her "candidacy." He also reported that a senior MFA official had received an ominous warning from CdI Assembly leader Mamadou Coulibaly, that the GoF should be vigilant to possible kidnappings or other security problems in Abidjan. Foucher confirmed that the GoF had made permanent reductions in its embassy staffing in Abidjan, and that French cooperation programs with CdI were practically frozen.

2. (C) On Senegal, Foucher revealed that President Wade demanded the departure of French Ambassador to Senegal Jean Didier Roisin (who will be replaced by the current Elysee Middle East advisor Andre Parant in February), after Roisin met with former Prime Minister Idrissa Seck. Foucher expressed satisfaction with the situation in Togo and asserted that Eyadema had completed 20 of the 22 commitments for resumption of EU cooperation, and that goal posts should not be moved now. He stressed GoF concerns on Guinea-Bissau, both on the amnesty granted to accused coup plotters and the dire economic situation. Foucher also described Guinea as in a catastrophic situation and noted President Conte appeared under increasing pro-reform influence of his interior minister and other younger generation officials. On ECOWAS, Foucher described French views as close to those of the U.S. and described it as an institution only as strong as its president; possible candidates for the next president, to be chosen January 18, included the Presidents of Mali and Gambia. End summary.

PESSIMISM ON COTE D'IVOIRE

3. (C) Foucher opened discussion on Cote d'Ivoire by describing France as "extremely pessimistic, like the U.S." The GoF was not at all satisfied with how the parties had worked together in recent months, and, for this reason, had sought to use the opportunity of the Libreville AU summit to move the process forward. Prior to the summit, the GoF had demarched heads of state in AU capitals with a five-part message, calling for the summit to:

- demand reinforcement of the UNSC arms embargo, which required effective CdI enforcement in the north and south;
- agree to begin work in the UNSC CdI sanctions committee on a draft list of individuals subject to sanctions, based on violations of human rights and incitement of hatred;
- establish a simplified calendar for the peace process on the basis of Accra III, with priority on beginning the cantonment of parties for disarmament and avoiding a referendum on modification of article 35 of the constitution;
- call for the reinforcement of ONUCI, with about 1200 supplemental troops, primarily from Africa; and
- ask for international supervision of elections, involving the AU and the UN.

(Note: Foucher provided Deputy Director Andre with a French language text of the GoF non-paper, which was faxed to AF/W and Embassy Abidjan. End note.) Foucher conceded that there had been a turnaround in the French position on the referendum on article 35 of the CdI constitution. France now opposes the referendum, which it views as a tool for Gbagbo to negate the Linas-Marcoussis accords and effectively

eliminate RDR leader Alassane Ouattara from the political process. When Andre noted that the GoF had demarched the USG to express a contrary position just last October, Foucher reported that the GoF was divided on the issue even at that time, and those in the GoF who had advocated the October position were "no longer dominant."

14. (C) Foucher also stressed French eagerness to begin discussions in the UNSC CdI sanctions committee on lists of persons subject to UN sanctions, as suggested in the GoF demarche to AU capitals (para 2). Foucher agreed with Andre's assessment that the lists should include persons from both sides of the conflict, and stressed that the UNSC needed to show the parties that it was working on the issue. The GoF believed we should start with lower level officials, particularly those directly responsible for human rights violations or inciting hatred. To demonstrate GoF seriousness on the issue, Foucher showed Andre a draft list that the MFA had put together of such individuals, which it was vetting with the Elysee. According to Foucher, the GoF wanted to proceed by discussing the lists in the sanctions committee now, as a sort of warning to the parties; then, if the situation deteriorated further, we should move to sanctioning individuals.

15. (C) On potential mediators in the CdI conflict, Foucher reported that the GoF had heard rumors that former U.S. Ambassador to CdI Arlene Render was under consideration to be named the next SRSG on CdI, replacing Albert Tevoedjre. Foucher indicated that the GoF would welcome Render's appointment, as she had significant expertise and it would be positive to have an American in such a key position. Foucher added that Gbagbo had rejected former Moroccan Ambassador to France Aboulhasan in the SRSG position, prompting the UN to continue the search for a suitable candidate. As for the efforts of South African President Mbeki, Foucher said the GoF could only support his efforts, though it was clear that the South African president knew less about CdI than its Gbagbo-skeptic neighbors and that he was close to Gbagbo.

16. (C) Foucher expressed alarm on potential deterioration of the security situation in CdI, describing the pro-Gbagbo militias as ready to begin massacres "at a moment's notice." French A/S-equivalent for Africa Bruno Joubert, during the recent reinvestiture of President Kufour in Ghana, had received a disturbing warning from CdI National assembly leader Mamadou Coulibaly, who advised him that the French should be vigilant on security in Abidjan and be on the lookout for possible kidnappings. Joubert, Foucher said, had interpreted the message as threatening. Asked by Andre about staffing of the French Embassy in Abidjan, Foucher confirmed that the GoF had drawn down staff considerably, consolidated them on one site, and would make permanent cuts in staffing due to the continued difficult security environment and forecast that this situation would not improve significantly in the foreseeable future. The French embassy had just received a new shipment of armored cars, having previously just one in its possession. Meanwhile, French cooperation activities in CdI were essentially suspended, with a few credits remaining open in case the situation dramatically improves.

SENEGAL: NEW AMBASSADOR

17. (C) Moving to other topics, Andre asked Foucher about the circumstances surrounding the replacement of French Ambassador to Senegal (and former MFA Africa Director) Jean-Didier Roisin, who had been at post only since August 2003. Foucher confided that Rosin had been removed at the request of President Wade, who was angered by the French Ambassador's having invited former Senegal Prime Minister Idrissa Seck (now seen by the GoF as out of favor) to lunch and complained to President Chirac. Wade had demanded the replacement of Rosin's predecessor under similar circumstances. Roisin's replacement will be current Elysee Technical Advisor on Middle East/Americas Andre Parant, whom Foucher stressed had significant Africa experience. (Note: Parant is an excellent, longtime embassy contact and we will report bio information on him septel. End note.) Roisin would remain in Senegal for the state visit of President Chirac February 2-3, and Parant would not arrive until later that month. Foucher stressed that Roisin was moving to a plum assignment as French Ambassador to Switzerland.

GUINEA-BISSAU

18. (C) Asked about the situation in Guinea Bissau, Foucher observed that the GoF was much less involved there than Portugal. The GoF hoped the political transition was returning to normalcy, with elections on track for May 2005. In the wake of the recent mutiny, the President and PM had managed to remain in place, though they were running scared. Foucher described as "scandalous" the fact that the murderers of the Army Chief of Staff had been offered amnesty with no

punishment. He summed up that the GoF remained worried about the political as well as economic situations, which remained grave.

TOGO

19. (C) Foucher responded positively when asked whether the EU was likely to resume full economic cooperation with Togo. He stressed that the GoF was content with the situation in Togo, and supported the efforts of the government to move towards legislative elections. He stressed that while the European Commission (EC) had previously questioned whether progress was genuine in Togo, the recent visit of EU commission representative Louis Michel had improved the situation. During Michel's trip to Togo, he saw "everyone" and observed two types of opposition, those who were constructive, vice those who were purely anti-regime. Foucher claimed that Michel had observed a real Togolese government seeking to advance, and added that Togo had met 20 of the 22 demands made by the EU. Foucher added that even once EU cooperation resumed, the EC would not give "carte blanche" to the Togolese, and that "every euro" of EU aid would be tightly controlled. Deputy Director Andre expressed skepticism on Foucher's positive assessment of the Eyadema government and questioned whether elections would indeed take place as scheduled, or if they could be free and fair, citing continued GoT harassment of political opposition. Andre questioned whether President Eyadema was ready to make the reforms which Foucher described as forthcoming. Foucher responded that Togo had fulfilled 20 of the 22 commitments asked of it although no one thought it would be willing to meet the conditions. It would be unjust to add new conditions or move the goal posts now. Also, Togo served as an important example to Guinea, as it sought to negotiate a contract with the EC on conditions for resumption of EU aid. Foucher cited the sentiment expressed by some African governments that we are more kind (or less demanding of) governments which come about via coups rather than those trying to reform themselves.

GUINEA

10. (C) Foucher shared Andre's view that Guinea remained in a catastrophic economic situation. For the first time, Guinea was seeking aid from France, a move which it had avoided given its long history of uneasy rapport with France. Foucher credited the Guinean decision to open talks with the EU on resumption of aid to the influence of younger ministers on President Conte, particularly the Minister of Interior. As for Conte's health, Foucher said it was impossible to predict how long he might last as the Guinean leader had long defied expectations of his imminent demise. Foucher said the GoF preferred to take a step-by-step approach in encouraging Guinea's readiness for the post-Conte era, rather than a "blank slate" approach. He downplayed French security cooperation with Guinea, claiming he was unsure whether such cooperation existed.

ECOWAS

11. (C) Asked for French views on the evolution of ECOWAS, Foucher said he saw the situation much in the same as the U.S. So far, ECOWAS had failed to become a strong institution independent of its leadership; it was only as strong as its president. Foucher said the GoF was aware of two possible candidates, to be chosen January 18 as next ECOWAS president: President Toure of Mali or President Jammeh of Gambia. Andre noted that the USG had presumed the next ECOWAS president, following tradition, would be Francophone, and was unaware that Jammeh was in the running. Foucher said that the GoF had heard the rumor of a possible Gambian presidency directly from Ghanaian President Kufour in Accra.

Leach